PAPER DETAILS

TITLE: From the Periphery to the Centre: A Sociological Analysis of the Transformation of African

American Muslims with Specific Reference to the Imam W. Mohammed and Minister Louis

Farrakhan Communities

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PAGES: 55-84

ORIGINAL PDF URL: https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/2278373

From the Periphery to the Centre: A Sociological Analysis of the Transformation of African American Muslims with Specific Reference to the Imam W. Mohammed and Minister Louis Farrakhan Communities*

Nuri Tınaz**

This paper examines sociologically the evolution of an ethno-religious, nationalist and political movement, the Nation of Islam (NOI). It critically analyzes the journey of a social movement and its evolution and transformation in the course of its history. Thus the study attempts to examine how and why a social, ethno-religious and political movement changes and transforms its radical, political and economic teachings and policies once it reaches a high level and has institutionally established itself in a society. It analyzes what kind of factors influenced the change in direction of the teachings and policies of the movement, as well as its external and internal relations with both the surrounding society and the infrastructure, which played a crucial role in the movement's establishment. Consequently the movement has moderated its teachings, policies and objectives, eventually becoming a part of established mainstream society.

Key words: Periphery, Center, Ethnicity, Race, Religion, Islam, Social and Political Movements, Interactional Relation.

Introduction

The history of the Nation of Islam (NOI) raises some theoretical issues with regard to the growth of the movement, its change and transformation. The NOI, having attained its highest level of development by the early 1960s, began to change its structure, ideology and emphasis of policies. There is a general agreement that all types of movements, social, political, or religious and their organisational forms undergo processes of change and transformation, both organisationally and ideologically over the course of their history. No movement comes into existence with a comprehensive ide-

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ology, a set of policies and an established organisational structure. These elements require a long process of development to become firmly established. In this paper, I will examine the NOI or African American Muslims' (AAM)[1] attempts at transformation and mainstreaming in social, political and economic spheres. The aim of this paper is to show how an ethnically conscious nationalist and religious movement moderates and changes its uncompromising economic and political teachings within the surrounding mainstream society after reaching the levels of organisational institutionalisation and economic development. Although the NOI briefly displayed the initial signs of transformation and accommodation in the Elijah Muhammad period, this paper will focus on the developments in the post-Elijah era; radical reformations and mainstreaming of the movement towards mainstream American social and political lives under the leadership of Imam Warith Deen Mohammed, and the polarization and revitalization of the old NOI's social, economic and political teachings and the objectives and programmes initiated by Minister Louis Farrakhan and other former NOI leading figures from the late 1970s onwards.[2] However, in the scope of this paper the revitalization and rebuilding attempts of the NOI carried out by Minister Louis Farrakhan will be taken into account.

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[1]　The term African American Muslim (AAM) covers and refers to a variety of Muslim communities in the USA. McCloud lists twenty-two different African American Muslim communities, both in the early and contemporary periods. See Amina B. McCloud, *African American Islam* (London & New York: Routledge, 1995). Danin also examines a variety of local African American Muslim communities and gatherings which have not been publicly heard about or recognised at nation-wide levels due to their localities and low profiles. See Robert Danin, *Black Pilgrimage to Islam* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[2]　Apart from these two widely-known nation-wide African American Muslim (AAM) communities, which owe their origins to Elijah Muhammad's NOI, there are several marginal splinter NOI communities that are active at local and regional levels. Prior to Minister Farrakhan's leaving the Imam's community, Silis Muhammad, former business manager of *Muhammad Speaks,* announced on 21 August 1977 that he was leaving. He was the first to publicly rebel against the Imam's reforms and formed a group that retained the original name of the NOI, known as the Lost-Found Nation of Islam (LFNOI). Silis claims to be the spiritual son of Elijah Muhammad, although there is no blood relation. He has rejected the changes, new teachings and policies that were introduced by Imam W. D. Mohammed. His community is based in Atlanta, GA, and has a couple thousand followers. There are over 20 Temples under his leadership, mostly in the south and on the West Coast and some East Coast regions of the USA. The group publishes a newspaper called *Muhammad Speaks*, a title that was used during the era of Elijah Muhammad. For the history and objectives of this splinter group, see Silis Muhammad, *The Wake of the Nation of Islam* (College Park, GA: The Author, 1985). John Muhammad, elder brother of Elijah Muhammad, rejected the new teachings and programmes of the Imam W. D. Mohammed and formed the NOI in very orthodox way in accord with that of Elijah Muhammad. He has a handful followers and a temple in Detroit. The organisation publishes *Minister John Muhammad Speaks*. See L. Jones, "Nations Apart", *Detroit News*, 17 July 1988. Emmanuel Muhammad's group is based in Baltimore and he claims to be the true successor of Elijah Muhammad. He has a

Since there are rich scholarly and reliable studies available on the NOI's historical development[3] transformation and schism[4] and the movement's religious doctrines[5] and political ideology and perspectives[6] I find it inappropriate to discuss these issues in detail in this paper. However, I will first give a brief

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couple of hundred followers and prints a paper called *Muhammad Speaks*. See A. H. Podet "Patterns of Classical Islam and Some American Black Muslims", *Religious Education* 89 (1994), 341-55. Finally, the last National Secretary of Elijah Muhammad, Abass Rassoull, formed a movement aiming to unite all the NOI splinter groups under one organisation, which is why he called his movement the United Nation of Islam. He calls himself Solomon, Allah in person. His group is active in two states, Kansas and Maryland, and makes local headlines and news. The movement shows relative success in communal and self-help economic policies. It publishes a periodical called *IT'S TIME TO KNOW!!!* See K. S. Breaux, "Muslim Group Restores Hope in Neighborhood", *Chicago Tribune*, 11 June 1999; D. Coe, "One Nation Begins Building a Business Empire", *Kansas City Globe*, 4 April 1997 and A. McLaughlin, "Bringing Allah to Urban Renewal", *Christian Science Monitor*, 1 December 1999.

[3] C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America,* rev. ed. (first published in 1961, Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), and *The Black Muslims in America,* 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994).

[4] Lawrence H. Mamiya, "From Black Muslim to Bilalian: The Evolution of a Movement", *Journal of the Scientific Study of Religion* 21 (1982), 138-52; Lawrence H. Mamiya, "Minister Louis Farrakhan and the Final Call: Schism in the Muslim Movement", in E.H. Waugh and B. Abu-Laban, eds., *The Muslim Community in North America* (Edmonton, Canada: University of Alberta Press, 1983), 234-55; Lawrence H. Mamiya, "The Black Muslims as a New Religious Movement', in International Symposium Proceedings by Chuo Academic Research Institute. *Conflict and Cooperation between Contemporary Religious Groups.* Tokyo: Nakamura Printing Co. Ltd, 1988) and Lawrence H. Mamiya and C. Eric Lincoln, 'Black Militant and Separatist Movements'. In C.H. Lippy and W. Williams (eds.) *The Encyclopaedia of American Religious Experience.* U.S.A: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1988), 756-57; C. Eric Lincoln "The American Muslim Mission in the Context of American Social History", in *Muslim Community in North America.* ed. E. H. Waugh and B. Abu-Laban (Edmonton, Canada: University of Alberta Press, 1983), 215-33; Clifton E. Marsh *From Black Muslims to Muslims: The Transition from Separation to Islam, 1930-1980* (Metuchen, NJ & London: The Scarecrow Press Inc. 1984) and Clifton E. Marsh, *From Black Muslims to Muslims: The Resurrection, Transition and Change of the Lost-Found Nation Islam in America, 1930-1995* (Metuchen, MD & London: The Scarecrow Press Inc. 1996); Martha L. Lee, *The Nation of Islam: An American Millenarian Movement* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1988); Mattias Gardell, *Countdown to Armageddon: Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam (*London: Hurst & Company, 1996); Nuri Tinaz, "The Schismatic Process and Experience of the Black Muslim: A Sociological Analysis", BSA Sociology of Religion Study Group, Religion, Culture and Ideology Conference, 1-4 April 1996, St. Mary's University College, Twickhanam, UK and "Nation of Islam: A Historical Evolution and Transformation of the Movement", *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 16/2 (1996).

[5] Zafar I. Ansari, "Aspects of Black Muslim Theology", *Studia Islamica* 53 (1981), 137-176; "The Religious Doctrines of the Black Muslims of America (1934-1974)", *Islamic Order* 7/2 (1985), 17-47 and "W. D. Muhammad: The Making of a 'Black Muslim' Leader 1933-1961," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 2/2 (1985).

[6] H. Walton and I. McIver, "The Political Theory of the Black Muslims", *Savannah State College Research Bulletin* (December 1974), 148-59; L. E. Wright, Jr, "The Political Thought of Elijah Muhammad: Innovation and Continuity in Western Tradition" (unpublished PhD Dissertation, Howard University 1987); and "Elijah Muhammad's Political Thought on God and Authority: A Quest for Authenticity and Freedom", *Journal of Religious Thought* 51 (1994-95), 47-75.

historical journey of that movement in order to inform general readers of the NOI and then focus on the developments, transformations and mainstreaming political and economic policies of NOI associated groups towards mainstream American society from the mid-1970s onwards, which are the central arguments of this paper. This has been chosen as the focus for this paper because these issues and policy changes are less-frequently studied and explored by scholars in both social sciences and religious studies. Both the radical changes and reforms that were introduced by Imam W. D. Mohammed in the process of the Islamization of his community[7], and the gradual and cautious policies of Minister Louis Farrakhan in introducing Islamic beliefs and practices to his current NOI[8] will not be taken into account or examined in this paper. I believe that it would be better and more appropriate to analyse and study these two leaders' policies in the mainstreaming and islamization of their communities from the periphery to the centre in a separate work.

The Nation of Islam – A Brief Historical Development

The Nation of Islam arose in the early 1930s in Detroit among recent black migrants who encountered social and economic uncertainties in the black ghettos of northern industrial cities; it was here that the socio-economic and political frustrations were largely felt during the Great Depression. The roots of the NOI can be traced back to the early part of the 20th century with the emergence of black ethno-religious and political movements. Although there was no organisational link with earlier ethno-religious or political movements, the NOI incorporated two traditions in particular; for religious teachings the 'Moorish Science Temple', and for political and nationalist ideology the 'International Negro Improvement' or 'Garveyite Movement'[9]. Since there are several scholarly studies on these movements[10]) there is no need to go into detail here. Rather I will continue to draw a brief picture of the NOI.

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[7] Nuri Tinaz, *Conversion of African Americans to Islam: A Sociological Analysis of the Nation of Islam Associated Groups* (unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Warwick, 2001); M. Gardell, "The Sun of Islam Will Rise in the West: Minister Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam in the Later Days" in *Muslims Communities in North America,* ed. Yvonne Y. Haddad and Jane I. Smith (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994); Gardell, *Countdown to Armageddon*; and Lee*, Nation of Islam.*

[8] Tinaz, *Conversion of African Americans*; Gardell, *Countdown to Armageddon.*

[9] E. U. Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism: A Search for an Identity in America* (5th impression, first published in 1962, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970); Lincoln, *Black Muslims,* rev. ed.

[10] Peter L. Wilson, "Shoot-Out at the Circle 7 Koran: Noble Drew Ali and the Moorish Science Temple", *Gnosis Magazine*, 12 (1989); Peter L. Wilson, *Sacred Drift: Essays on the*

It was within this context, in the summer of 1930, that an amicable but faintly mysterious peddler appeared in the black ghetto of Detroit, Paradise Valley, selling silks and raincoats but also giving advice to the impoverished southern migrants on issues of health, identity and spiritual development. He told the black migrants that their true religion was not Christianity, but the 'religion of the Black Men' of Asia and Africa. He often referred to himself as Farrad Mohammed, but he was also known as Walli Farrad, Wallace D. Fard, and Professor Ford. Using both the Bible and the Qur'an in his services and lectures, he began teaching in the private homes of his followers, later renting a hall that became known as the Temple of Islam.

He taught his followers about the nature and character of whites, whom he called 'blue-eyed devils', who had achieved their power and denomination through brutality, murder and trickery. As a prerequisite for black freedom, he gave more importance to the attainment of 'knowledge of self', 'love yourself', and 'know yourself'. He reminded his followers that they were not American and therefore owed no allegiance to the US. He wrote two booklets for the organisation, *The Secret Ritual of the Nation of Islam*, which was transmitted orally to the registered members, and *Teaching for the Lost-Found Nation of Islam in Mathematical Way*, which is written in symbolic and coded language and therefore required special interpretation.[11]

Within a few years, Fard formed several organisations such as the Temple of Islam, which was a place of worship and had its own style and rituals, a school called the University of Islam, which essentially combined primary and secondary education for black children to propagate the NOI's teachings, the Muslim Girls' Training Class, which aimed to teach and train young women in home economics and proper Muslim behaviour, and the Fruit of Islam, a quasi-military organisation consisting of male Muslims who provided security for Muslim leaders and enforced the internal discipline of the movement.[12]

Margins of Islam (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1993); Arthur H. Fauset, *Black Gods of the Metropolis: Negro Religious Cults of the Urban North* (first published by University of Pennsylvania Press, 1944, reprinted by Ortagon Press, New York, 1970); Randall K. Burkett, *Garveyism as a Religious Movement: The Institutionalization of a Black Civil Religion* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1978); Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism;* and Lincoln, *Black Muslims.*

[11] Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*; Lincoln, *Black Muslims*; Tinaz "Nation of Islam"; and Lawrence H. Mamiya "Nation of Islam" in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, ed. John Esposito (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), vol. 4.

[12] Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*; Lincoln, *Black Muslims*; Tinaz "Nation of Islam"; and *Conversion of African Americans* and Mamiya "Nation of Islam".

Born Elijah Robert Poole in 1897 in Sanderville, Georgia, Elijah Muhammad was the seventh of twelve children of a rural Baptist minister. He migrated to northern Detroit in search of employment. In 1931 Poole met Wallace D. Fard, who had established the first Temple of Islam in Detroit. He became a devoted follower of Fard, rising rapidly through the ranks and consequently was chosen by Fard as a chief lieutenant. Fard honoured him by appointing him as a minister of Islam and giving him a true Muslim name, Muhammad, and abolishing his slave name, Poole. Fard's mysterious disappearance, like his unaccountable appearance, took place in the summer of 1934. After Fard's disappearance, the movement experienced power conflicts and schisms among ministers and elite personnel. The end result was that Elijah Muhammad managed to succeed Fard as the leader of community. He announced to the members of the NOI that Wallace D. Fard was actually the incarnation of God and that he, Elijah Muhammad, himself, was his messenger. Fard's enigmatic nature has remained a mystery and unsolved throughout the entire history of movement; whether he was God personified, a messenger, Prophet Fard, Walli Farrad, the Great Mahdi, or a Saviour.[13]

Elijah moved the organisational headquarters to Chicago; this was a de facto schism, as it took the movement away from those who did not recognise his leadership. The movement remained relatively dormant from the late 1930s to the mid-1940s because of two reasons, one being the internal conflicts and lack of mobilisation of the NOI. The other was the absence of leadership. Elijah Muhammad spent four years in prison for encouraging draft refusal during World War II. After his release in 1946 the movement spread rapidly, particularly with the aid of his chief lieutenant, Malcolm X (formerly Malcolm Little), who converted and joined the movement while he was still serving a prison sentence (1946-1952).[14]

The NOI, over the forty years of Elijah Muhammad's guidance, developed and elaborated detailed programmes for the black masses in the areas of economics, politics and identity, leading to a development of Muslim business in order to achieve economic independence, a demand for political separation, even sometimes going further and asking for a separate territory inside the US and the recovery of an acceptable and comfortable identity. During his leadership, the NOI developed economically and organisationally; more than

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[13] Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*; Lincoln, *Black Muslims*; "Nation of Islam" and *Conversion of African Americans to Islam;* and Mamiya "Nation of Islam".

[14] Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*; Lincoln, *Black Muslims*; Tinaz "Nation of Islam" and *Conversion of African Americans;* and Mamiya "Nation of Islam".

one hundred mosques (initially called Temples of Islam), countless grocery stores, bakeries, and other small businesses, even a bank and freight transport company were established all over the US. The movement introduced its own brand product to market goods like bean pies and whiting fish, which were widely consumed among African Americans to improve their nutrition and physical health. He even wrote two volumes of a book, *How to Eat To Live,* as a kind of prescription guiding black people how to eat properly and observe dietary principles that the NOI teachings prescribed.[15]

Through his popular motto, *Message to the Blackman*, Elijah Muhammad not only reformed and changed the African Americans' social and economic status, the way of their life and public image, but he also restored their sense of dignity, selfhood, identity and behaviour. He propagated his message and reached out to the black masses through public lectures, articles in *Muhammad Speaks*, the movement's official newspaper, tapes, radio broadcastings and books. He wrote several books, *Message To The Blackman, The Fall of America, Our Saviour Has Arrived*, etc.

The movement gained momentum by finding an energetic convert called Malcolm Little, who was serving a ten year prison term for burglary in Norfolk State prison in the late 1940s. When his cellmate whispered to him that 'The white man is the Devil', it began to give him a reasonable explanation for the pain and suffering he had experienced, for example, his father's murder by the KKK (Ku Klux Klan), the white supremacist group, the destruction of his family, his dropping out of school and the years he had worked as a hustler and pimp on the streets of Roxbury, Boston and Harlem, New York City. After his release from prison in 1952, Malcolm Little took the surname X as a sign of negating the name given to him by the white man, the slave master. He rose rapidly in the ranks of the movement and became prominent as a minister. Recognising Malcolm's talents and abilities, Elijah Muhammad also appointed him as the 'national representative' of the NOI, second in rank to Elijah Muhammad himself. The ability of Malcolm X as an orator and organiser enabled him to enjoy great popularity among the NOI Muslims. In short, he was responsible for the expansion of the movement organisationally as well as for popularising the teachings of the NOI and increasing membership throughout the country during his era (1952-1963). Consequently, the NOI began drawing widespread media attention as a result

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[15] Mamiya "Nation of Islam"; Tinaz "Nation of Islam"; Gardell, *Countdown to Armageddon*.

of its rapid growth and the discovery of its teachings on race in the late 1950s and the early 1960s.[16]

During the civil rights movement from 1956 to 1965, as an articulate public speaker, charismatic personality, untiring organiser and mobiliser, Malcolm X expressed the rage and anger of the black masses and became one of the loudest and most articulate voices and critics of racial injustice in the country. Rejecting the non-violent and integrationist policies of Martin Luther King Jr, he argued that separatism and self-determination were necessary if blacks were to achieve full equality.[17] Nevertheless, the heydays and rapid growth of the NOI and his reputation became short-lived when the movement became a centre of controversy due to internal and external developments, including allegations of sexual misconduct by Elijah Muhammad and his secretaries[18] Increasing jealousy and power and personality conflicts between Malcolm and the top officials of the NOI led to his departure from the movement with the pretext that he had made public comments about the assassination of President Kennedy. All of these factors indicated schism and power and personality struggles in the movement. Mamiya categorises these reasons as firstly, the existence of a power struggle for leadership of the NOI, secondly that there were serious disagreements over teachings and policies, and thirdly, the changing socio-economic conditions of members of the movement.[19]

Breaking away from the NOI in 1964, Malcolm made his pilgrimage to Mecca where he observed the racial harmony, cosmopolitanism, tolerance and practices of mainstream Islam. He then concluded that the teachings of the NOI were incompatible with his new understanding of Islam. In order to popularise his new understanding of Islam and political agendas for African Americans, he established two organisations; one the Muslim Mosque Inc. was in the religious realm, while the other was the Organisation of Afro-American Unity, which had a more secular and political thrust.[20]

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[16] Karl Evanzz, *The Judas Factor: The Plot to Kill Malcolm X* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1992); Bruce Perry, *Malcolm: The Life of a Man Who Changed Black America* (New York: Station Hill Press, 1992); Louis A. DeCaro, "Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam: Two Moments in His Religious Sojourn" (unpublished PhD Dissertation, New York University Press, 1994).

[17] P. Goldman, *The Death and Life of Malcolm X,* 2nd ed. (Urbana, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1979); Perry, *Malcolm.*

[18] Malcolm X, *The Authobiography of Malcolm X,* with the assistance of Alex Haley (London: Penguin, 1968); Evanzz, *Judas Factor*; Perry, *Malcolm.*

[19] Evanzz, *Judas Factor;* Perry, *Malcolm*; Goldman, *Death and Life of Malcolm X;* Tinaz, "Schismatic Process and Experience of the Black Muslims". For further sociological analysis of the factors and reasons that played major role in the schism and power struggle between the NOI ruling stratum and Malcolm X, see ch. III.

[20] Malcolm X, *Authobiography of Malcolm X*; DeCaro, *Malcolm X;* Tinaz, *Conversion of African Americans.*

On 21 February 1965, Malcolm X was assassinated. The assassination left some unanswered questions as to who had planned and perpetrated the murder, a member of the NOI or the US governmental establishments and agents, or both in cooperation.[21] The incident caused disruption and schism in the movement and eventually slowed down the growth of the organization and the growth of membership, on the one hand. On the other hand, the life and death of Malcolm X helped to increase interest in mainstream Islam among Black Americans. However, the signs of interest would wait to emerge in and influence African Americans over the next ten years. Malcolm X's religious legacy and prophecy would be fulfilled and actualised by Imam W. D. Mohammed when he became the leader of NOI in 1975 upon the death of Elijah Muhammad.[22]

Over the next ten years Elijah Muhammad tried to keep alive and together the doctrines of the NOI and its members. Although the movement enjoyed economic prosperity and maintained its organisational influence, it never achieved the same popularity. In the early 1970s Elijah Muhammad slightly moderated his teachings and policies by tuning down his anti-white rhetoric; moreover, he also appeared to have moved and become inclined towards mainstream Islam[23] This long-time charismatic leader of the NOI died on February 1975 without nominating a personal successor to his post. The anticipated power struggle for the leadership position as the successor of Honourable Elijah Muhammad did not take place, at least, not immediately, not until 1977.[24] However, the NOI's religious teachings, political objectives and organisational structures underwent modification and even radical changes and outright reversals of direction, with the accession of his son, Wallace Muhammad, then Imam W. D. Mohammed.[25]

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[21] Evanzz, *Judas Factor;* Perry, *Malcolm*; Gardell, *Countdown to Armageddon*. Gardell studied the NOI movement by using the US archives and indicated that the US departments and agents were involved in and contributed to the assassination and created deep internal conflict and mistrust in the movement.

[22] Fareed Munir, *Islam in America: An African American Pilgrimage Towards Coherence* (unpublished PhD Thesis, Temple University, 1993); Tinaz, *Conversion of African Americans*.

[23] Lee, *Nation of Islam*; Tinaz "Nation of Islam" and *Conversion of African Americans*; Gardell, *Countdown to Armageddon*.

[24] However, in August 1977 onwards the new leadership of NOI, then called The World Community al-Islam in the West (WCIW), encountered with and experienced several schisms initiated by some leading figures. See for further information on footnote 2 above.

[25] These changes and radical reforms in organisational structure, the NOI's policies and objectives, and most significant one in religious teachings and practices will not discussed and examined in the paper. For these changes and reforms see Lincoln "The American Muslim Mission in the Context of American Social History". 215-33; Lincoln, *Black Muslims*, 3rd

Theoretical Framework

All types of movements, social, political or religious and their organisational forms undergo processes of change and transformation, both organisationally and ideologically over the course of their history.[26] No movement comes into existence with a comprehensive ideology, a set of policies or an established organisational structure. These elements require a long process of development to become firmly established. The history of the NOI raises some theoretical issues with regard to the growth of the movement, change and transformation. The NOI, having attained its highest level of development by the early 1960s, had begun to change in structure, ideology and emphasis of policies.

The transformation of social and religious organisations has been analysed for the most part through the perspective of the institutionalisation model. According to this model, when social and religious groups attain substantial levels of economic and political influence and membership they tend to modify their organisational structures, ideologies and agendas, eventually leading to institutionalisation. Inspired by Weber and Michels' theoretical framework, Zald and Ash have attempted to formalise a model.

> As a MO [movement organisation] attains an economic and social base in society, as the original charismatic leadership is replaced, a bureaucratic structure emerges and a general accommodation to the society occurs. The participants in this structure have a stake in preserving the organisation, regardless of its ability to attain goals. Analytically there are three types of changes involved in this process; empirically they are often fused; goal transformation, a shift to organisational maintenance, and oligarchization.[27]

These three types of changes began to appear in the NOI in the early 1960s. First, the NOI's ideal and transcendental goals were transformed from the militant and revolutionary towards conservatism and material interests. Second, after attaining organisational and economic institutionalisation, the NOI tended to modify its beliefs and policies in close alignment with dominant societal norms.[28] Third, the NOI formed a centralised official hierarchy

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ed., 254-72; Mamiya, "From Black Muslim to Bilalian", 138-52; Tinaz, *Conversion of African Americans,* 225-65; and Gardell, *Countdown to Armageddon,* 97-118.

[26] Robert Michels, *Political Parties* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1958); M. Zald & R. Ash "Social Movement Organizations: Growth, Decay, and Change", *Social Forces* 44 (1966), 327-41; and Max Weber, *Economy and Society,* ed. G. Roth and C. Wittich (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1978).

[27] Zald & Ash, "Social Movement Organizations", 327.

[28] M. Parenti, "The Black Muslims: From Revolution to Institution", *Social Research* 31 (1964), 175-94.

consisting of, in Zald and Ash's terms, a 'minority of the organisation's members'[29], that is, Elijah Muhammad's family and close relatives.

The relative improvement in material comfort caused a 'goal transformation'[30] or displacement among the officials of the NOI to adjust and moderate the movement's extreme and uncompromising 'pure beliefs' and 'original policies' which had been advocated over the years. In this modification, certainly, the outgrowth of the organisation and the huge accumulation of wealth engendered social mobility in the nature of the movement. Yinger sees the fluctuation of social mobility as a powerful source of changing religious commitment.[31] In the case of the NOI, Parenti has observed that these worldly interests and material conditions adulterated and undermined the transcendental values of the community.[32] Furthermore, at the individual level, in the late 1950s, Essien-Udom noted the impact of the socio-economic accomplishments of the NOI over member incentives. He argues that 'members of the Nation appear to be economically more secure than many Negroes' as a result of their observance of the moral codes and economic principles of the leader. He concludes that 'an improved economic status tends to moderate the militancy of the members. In fact, this interest in the acquisition of wealth appears to be one of the important internal constraints on the possibility of the movement becoming politically significant or revolutionary'.[33]

In his classic work in this area, Lincoln compared the impact of the economic and political developments of the NOI in the 1960s, which created polarisation in the direction of the policies of the movement.

> As the movement [NOI] gained vested interests - real estate and commercial enterprises, as well as economic and political weight in the Black and White communities - one block of the Muslim leadership has become increasingly conservative. It will urge the case for maintaining a stable status quo, rather than risk the loss of so much that will have been so arduously gained. This block will very quickly realize that the Muslim gains can be protected only while there is a fairly stable White society in America.[34]

Lincoln described the tendency of the second bloc, which were the young Muslims, to be

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[29] Zald & Ash, "Social Movement Organizations", 328.
[30] Zald & Ash, "Social Movement Organizations", 329.
[31] J. Milton Yinger, *The Scientific Study of Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1970), 230-34.
[32] Parenti, "Black Muslims", 180-85.
[33] Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, 170.
[34] Lincoln, *Black Muslims*, 218.

scornful of mere material and negotiable gains. Clinging to the spirit of the original revelation and holding it capable of continual renewal in each generation, it will demand a rentless war on the detested status quo, with its entrenched White domination.[35]

The Role of Interactional and Relational Factors in Mainstreaming

Zald and Ash argue that interaction among movement organisations may lead to co-operation, coalitions and mergers. They give more emphasis, however, to the importance of coalitions and mergers for interaction. They argue that these two 'may lead to new organisational identities, changes in the membership base, and changes in goals'. They further maintain, in general, that these two factors 'require ideological compatibility'.[36]

There is a general understanding that social movements and their organisational patterns undergo change and transformation over time.[37] As I discussed in my study[38] one of the factors that caused the schism was a movement away from the original teachings and objectives of the NOI; this is a sign of institutionalisation.[39] No social or religious movement comes into existence with a fully articulated ideology, a complete set of objectives and policies or a well-founded organisational structure.[40] Both the organisational patterns and ideology of social and religious movements seem to have a protean character because of their membership composition, which is generally young and subject to a process of change. They respond to the socio-political environment and circumstances surrounding them in society.

Every social movement sooner or later develops its own social, political and economic philosophy. If the group fails to form these collectively in the society in which it arose during the lifetime of a charismatic leader, it is done by an individual or a group of people in the next generation of the movement, either to accommodate the dominant society's system or to carry on the exclusivist political and economic philosophy of the first generation of the movement. Unlike Elijah Muhammad's political escapisms, separatism and qui-

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[35] Lincoln, *Black Muslims*, 218.
[36] Zald & Ash, "Social Movement Organizations", 335.
[37] Michels, *Political Parties*; Zald & Ash, "Social Movement Organizations"; Weber, *Economy and Society*.
[38] Tinaz, *Conversion of African Americans,* ch. III.
[39] Parenti, "Black Muslims".
[40] E. Burke Rochford, Jr, *Hare Krishna in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1985).

etism, and economic exclusivist and self help communal policies,[41] in the post-Elijah era two contending AAM leaders, Imam W. D. Mohammed and Minister L. Farrakhan introduced new political and economic policies that tended to display accommodationist and, to some extent, integrationist characters, particularly where Imam W. D. Mohammed is concerned. However, while the former launched his reforms radically towards mainstream American societal, economic and political values from the mid-1970s onwards, the latter entered the process only from the late 1980s or the early 1990s, sometimes displaying a critical stance and sometimes being an accommodationist.

As social or religious movements develop in social and cultural environments, their relations with the surrounding society change sometimes dramatically and sometimes gradually.[42] The developments in the NOI and its associate groups since the mid-1970s indicate that these groups have been in the process of institutionalisation, displaying their gradual move to mainstream society.

Imam W. D. Mohammed's Political and Economic Policies

With his death, the legacy of Elijah Muhammad came to an end. His son Wallace Muhammad, as the new leader, gradually initiated a process of reconstructing the NOI and its teachings, organisational structures, symbols and practices, not only to accommodate the mainstream beliefs and practices of Islam, but also to achieve greater harmony with the movement's social context and environment in the USA.

Wallace Muhamamd was born on 30 October, 1933, as the seventh child or fifth son of Clara and Elijah Muhammad. He was educated in the NOI schooling system, at the University of Islam, and trained to serve in different positions in the movement infrastructure, such as an FOI soldier and minister in Philadelphia. In 1961 he was sentenced to three years in prison for refusing the draft laws. While he was in prison he spent time reading Islamic literature and began to realise that there were inconsistencies between orthodox Islam and his father's teachings. Since then he has broken away from

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[41] In this study it has been discussed in depth that some of the important factors which caused schisms in the NOI between the young and activist figures, like Malcolm X and the Chicago ruling-stratum and officials, were political, personal conflicts, policy differences and economic improvements. See Tinaz, *Conversion of African Americans*, ch. III.

[42] M. Zald, *Organizational Change: The Political Economy of the YMCA* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); J. Wilson, *Introduction to Social Movements* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

the religious beliefs of the NOI and envisioned a reformed version of religion in line with orthodox Islam.[43] In the early 1960s, he once confided to Malcolm X about his personal convictions and plans for the future of NOI as a legitimate Islamic movement.[44]

Wallace Muhammad (then Imam W. D. Mohammed) moved the members of the NOI toward embracing orthodox Islam. He explained that the language and teachings of Wallace D. Fard and Elijah Muhammad were to be understood allegorically, not literally. He opened the doors of the movement to white people[45] and encouraged his followers to join in the civil and political life of the USA. He also proposed several new names and changed the organisation in a way that reflected the Islamisation process and accommodation with the host society; for example, 'Bilalian', 'the World Community of Al-Islam in the West', 'the American Muslim Mission', 'Muslim American Society'[46] and then, after decentralising in September 2003, the loosely-structured and autonomous community called 'the Mosque Cares'.[47]

By the early 1980s, Imam W. D. Mohammed had accomplished a series of changes and reforms in administrative structure and in the official policy towards race relations and political involvement. He eradicated racist and separatist teachings and rhetoric, reinterpreting other doctrines to enhance the group's consistency and compatibility with orthodox Islam. Here, in this article, I will mainly analyse his economic and political policies in mainstreaming his community toward the American society. The reforms and changes that he introduced in areas of religion, morality and spiritual areas have been discussed and analysed in detail elsewhere.[48]

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[43] Imam W. D. Mohammed expressed his feelings about the dilemma and uncomfortability of the E. Muahmmad's Islamic teachings that he went through (Interview with Imam W. D. Mohammed, 5 July 1995).

[44] Malcolm X, *Authobiography of Malcolm X*, 453.

[45] Dr. Doherty Fardan was the first White Muslim who was accepted as a registered Muslim in the NOI when Imam W. D. Mohammed opened the movement's doors to non-blacks in 1975. Through personal communication and letter exchange she told me that she even became Muslim in the late 1960s through her husband but she was not allowed and welcomed to join the NOI under the Elijah Muhammad. Because the membership was exclusively for Black people (25 April 1996).

[46] Mamiya, "From Black Muslim to Bilalian", 138-52; Tinaz, *Conversion of African Americans,* ch. VII; Lincoln "American Muslim Mission", 215; Gardell, *Countdown to Armageddon*, 97-118.

[47] Peter Skerry, "America's Other Muslims", *The Wilson Quarterly* 29/4 (2005), 16-27.

[48] Mamiya, "From Black Muslim to Bilalian", 138-52; Tinaz, *Conversion of African Americans,* ch. VII; Gardell, *Countdown to Armageddon*, 97-118; Lee, *Nation of Islam*, 77-101.

Imam W. D. Mohammed explains his fundamental shift from the Elijah Muhammad tradition in areas of the economy and politics and the objectives of this:

> Now, it's different. The Honorable Elijah Muhammad was a product of an ugly time and climate in this country for our people. As he grew older, so conditions improved for Black people in America he softened his own position. He wasn't hard ... he changed a lot. He changed quite a bit in the early 1970s ... And that was the intelligent thing to do. He recognised that circumstances have changed: the harsh environment, discrimination, segregation, abuse, mistreatment of the Black people in the South that had gone. That was over. So he had to recognise the change. When I asked and authorized Muslims in our associations to register to vote and take active role in politics, I thought it was the next step he was going to ...[49]

At the 1976 Saviour's Day celebration, the Imam authorised all members of his community to register to vote in local and federal elections. Moreover, the movement officially endorsed candidates, mostly from the Democrat Party. Having noticed this fertile electoral constituency, political parties began courting the votes of those called, at that time, the 'Black Muslims'. In return, the Muslim officials intended to benefit from backing these parties.[50] These practical political and economic policies[51] were new for those who had joined the NOI during Elijah Muhammad's leadership and they were also fundamental changes from its long-time political absentism and quietism.[52] Another

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[49] Interview with Imam W. D. Mohammed, 25 December 1995.

[50] J. D. Weisman, "Muslims Break with Past, Authorize Number to Vote", *Washington Post*, 29 February 1976.

[51] For further information about the NOI's political and economic policies during the time of Elijah Muhammad, see Walton & McIver, "Political Theory of the Black Muslims", 148-59; Wright, Jr, "Political Thought of Elijah Muhammad" and "Elijah Muhammad's Political Thought on God and Authority", 47-75; Parenti, "Black Muslims"; Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*; L. L. Tyler, "The Protestant Ethic Among the Black Muslims", *Phylon* 27 (1966), 5-14.

[52] Imam W. D. Mohammed has introduced several radical reforms since he became the leader of the NOI, like which have been religious, political and organisational. Through religious reforms, he introduced and brought the community to mainstream Islam both in terms of beliefs and practices. Through political reforms, he encouraged his followers to participate in American domestic politics, both locally and nationwide. And through organisational changes, he brought the NOI from a radical, nationalist and ethnic consciousness peripheral stance to mainstream societal and organisational norms by changing the name and infrastructure of the NOI, for example, the Bilalian Muslims, the World Community al-Islam in the West (WCIW), and the American Muslim Mission. During my field research in 1995 and 1996 until the late 1990s the community was called the Muslim American Society (MAS). In early September 2002, Imam W. D. Mohammed resigned from the leadership position and decentralised the community. See G. Abdo and A. Madhani, "Turning Point for Islamic Blacks", *Chicago Tribune*, 2 September 2002. Recently, he formed a very association called the Mosque Cares, which has a loose format that gives directions and instructions to Muslims, mostly to African American Muslims on religious, Islamic, and political matters together and in cooperation with other Muslim organisations in the USA. (Interview with

surprising change introduced into the political sphere was patriotism. The Imam has embarked on a refreshingly new commitment to patriotism in America. To demonstrate that it was a genuine policy of the movement, the Muslim officials decided to hoist the American Flag at each Masjid and institution affiliated with the group and the flag began to be displayed on stage at all meetings in the community. The first New World Patriotism Day Parade was held in Chicago on July 4, 1977. Since then all Muslims have been encouraged to take part in the celebrations of the New World Patriotism Day Parade in major cities of America.[53] Moreover, Imam W. D. Mohammed brought a new dimension to how they look at the American Constitution. He said that 'the language and spirit of the Constitution of the United States is too valuable for us to allow them to die'.[54]

In the economic sphere, as indicated earlier in his reforms, the Imam privatised all communal business enterprises of the movement because they had been mismanaged and had lost great amounts of money. Having been inspired by his father's, Elijah Muhammad, 'economic blueprints' and 'do for self' teachings and programmes[55]), Imam W. D. Mohammed introduced two economic programmes in the 1980s; one was the 'Collective Buying Program' and the other was 'the American Muslim Mission Committee to Purchase 100,000 Commodities (AMMCOP)'.[56] However, these two programmes were unlike the old NOI's style of economic policies; they were not centralised or monitored from the central authority, but rather were locally run by Muslim officials for the interest of the communities. Under these programmes, Muslims could buy large quantities of clothes, shoes, fish, appliances, etc. at wholesale prices and sell them in their local communities across the US.[57] With these policies, they created more competitive businesses and there were more individual business

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and personal communication from L.M. Mamiya, October 24, 2003). For further information about the evolution of Imam's community, see also Tinaz, *Conversion of African Americans*, ch. VII; Gardell, *Countdown to Armageddon*, 97-118.

[53] S. R. Sharif, *The African American (Bilalian) Image in Crisis* (Jersey City, NJ: New Mind Production, 1985), 117-19; N. Sheppard, "Islamic Leader Says Organisation is Taking a Turn Toward Patriotism" *New York Times*, 25 May 1978; N. Sheppard, "Black Muslim Movement Divided in Dispute over Doctrinal Changes", *New York Times*, 7 March 1978.

[54] Sharif, *African American Image*, 117.

[55] Elijah Muhammad, *Message to the Blackman: The Fall of America* (Newport News, VA: United Brothers Communications System, 1995), 161-203.

[56] S. E. Bilal, "American Muslims Spur Collective Buying Drive", *Bilalian News*, 15 May 1981; A. Mustaph, ed., *Focus on Al-Islam, Interviews with Imam W. Deen Mohammed* (Chicago: Zakat Publications, 1988); Sharif, *African American Image*, 104-21.

[57] C. G. Bunn "Prayers and Profits", *Black Enterprise*, December 1983, 4:28; Sharif, *African American Image*.

people in the community. In the 1990s, the AAMs affiliated with the Imam's MAS, Ministry of Imam W. Deen Mohammed still advocates these economic co-operative policies. The Imam encourages the Muslims in his associations to undertake more collective and co-operative business investments.[58] A local Imam contrasts the business successes of Muslims with the former practices of the NOI and with Farrakhan's methods:

> He [Imam W. D. Mohammed] is a strong advocate of business developments. And I think that it should be understood that what Minister Farrakhan is doing there as our past economic policies, facilities, soap, trucks, restaurants ... business developments ... We have [Muslims in the Imam's associations] now individuals who that many trucks, one person. We have persons who own restaurants, groceries, supermarkets ... and have very successful businesses ... the individual business developments, enterprises improved greatly under Imam W. D. Mohammed's leadership and guidance ...[59]

Such socio-economic improvement by Muslims was self-reported by the respondents in my study and their current occupational statuses draw similar parallels.[60] In comparison with other African-American communities, AAMs were in a good position and they disciplined and improved their lives both materially and educationally.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Imam W. D. Mohammed encouraged Muslims in his associations to participate in and engage actively in domestic politics, both at local and federal levels. In August 1984, the Imam's community held its first Political Awareness Convention in Washington, D.C. In the early 1990s, he made an astonishing political policy statement when he supported the US Gulf War policies. This surprised not only the immigrant Muslims in the US and but also the AAM communities. The Imam received criticism from most of the AAMs for his pro-American international policy against a Muslim country, Iraq (Muwakkil, 1991). Unlike the Imam's policies, Minister Farrakhan showed different reactions towards American policies, which I will briefly indicate later. During my field research, the Imam explained to me his political objectives in this specific event:

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[58] H. Saleem, "Imam Mohammed's Reassuring the Present and Future Growth of CPC", *Muslim Journal*, 5 February 1998; N. Muhammad, "W. Deen Mohammed's Property Committee Hosts its Annual Fund-Raiser", *Muslim Journal*, 5 February 1998.

[59] Interview with Imam Rabbani Mubashir, 23 September 1995.

[60] The impact of the NOI's economic teachings and programmes on the improvement of the socio-economic status of Muslims is displayed both at the individual and the community level. See Tinaz, *Conversion of African Americans,* chs V and VI; Mamiya, "From Black Muslim to Bilalian", 138-52; S. T Smith, "A Historical Account of the American Muslim Mission with Specific Reference to North Caroline" (unpublished Master Thesis, Faculty of Southeastern Babtist Theological Seminary, 1984).

What's important, what's important is that we be sincere Muslims and that we have the interest, the good interest of Muslims, not here only here in America but throughout the world. We have that interest in our hearts and that we respect that respect our religion, respect Muslims of the World. And we want for them the best life possible on this earth. If that's in our hearts then God will guide us to direct the right decision. I believe I made the right decision when I chose to support Saudi Arabia and Kuwait against Iraq and Saddam. I think I made the right decision ... Saddam's case was partism. That's what we felt. That's what we believed. Saddam, he wasn't a leader for Muslims and all of a sudden he wanted to say he's the leader for all Muslims. He wanted to lead the Jihad for the Muslims of the World, you know. We couldn't believe him, we couldn't trust him ... But some differ with me, a lot of them, in fact, more communities in America differ with me than agree with me ... It wasn't an easy decision to stand on the side; America's presence in the Sacred Land, in our land, in the Muslim land of Arabia ...[61]

In 1992, Imam W. D. Mohammed made another interesting move. He became the first Muslim to lead the opening prayer at the U.S. Senate. This was a step further into mainstream American society where the AAMs under his associations were seeking a political role and aiming to be a pro-American bridge between the US and the Muslim World.[62] Upon the Imam's instructions, Muslim officials and professionals associated with his MAS formed a platform called the Coalition for Good Government (CGG) in order to participate in domestic policies and even run for governmental offices. The CGG consists of 15 Muslim professionals who serve in important governmental and political positions throughout the US.[63] The editor of *The Muslim Journal*, the community's newspaper, Aisha Mustapha, explains the political roles of Muslims.

He [Imam W. D. Mohammed] has encouraged Muslims to participate politically, even (to) run for offices. And now we have an organisation called the Coalition for Good Government ... It is nation-wide. They're made up of elected officials. It might be like city-council elected, or they may behalf elected judges ... We have also a Mayor city, we had a Muslim that's a Deputy Mayor ...'[64]

Finally, Imam W. D. Mohammed comments on current and future roles of Muslims in US politics.

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[61] Interview with Imam W. D. Mohammed, 25 December 1995.

[62] L. Witham, "In a Senate First, Muslim Leads the Opening Prayer", *Washington Times*, 7 February 1992.

[63] C. Sharif, "Muslims Make Political Inroads", *Muslim Journal*, 9 February 1999.

[64] Interview with Aisha Mustapha, editor of Muslim Journal, Imam W. D. Mohammed's community newspaper, 3 December 1999.

It's growing and really I think it's promising. The future looks good ... we have some areas (that are) more progress for Muslims in politics than others but in all areas I think we're looking very good. Muslims have a big share of the government offices, government posts ... We're growing so strong, in the South, in the East and the North and in California also making a good showing. So I think, generally, we can say the situation is very good in the US for Muslims in politics. And recently, nationalized Muslims [immigrant Muslims] have joined us and some of them are making more progress than we're making, Pakistanis in Chicago, Arabs in Michigan. They're doing very good ...[65]

Minister L. Farrakhan's Political and Economic Policies

Minister Louis Farrakhan was born Louis Eugene Walcott in the Bronx on 11 May 1933. He is the son of a West Indian immigrant and grew up in Boston as a devout Episcopalian. His mother was Mae Clark from St. Kitts in the Caribbean, but he never met his father. His mother was a supporter of Marcus Garvey and gave him racial pride and identity consciousness. He graduated from Boston Latin School with honours and he studied two years at the Winston-Salem-Teachers College in North Carolina studying music education. Louis was recruited into the NOI by Malcolm X while he was working at various nightclubs, where he was known as 'the Charmer' in the mid-1950s. He was trained by Malcolm X and appointed Minister of Muhammad's Temple No 11 in Boston.[66] When Malcolm defected from the NOI in 1964, Farrakhan was appointed to Malcolm's post at Harlem Mosque No 7. Later he became the National Spokesman of Elijah Muhammad and the NOI.[67]

Prior to Minister Farrakhan's public announcement of his defection, Silis Muhammad declared 'Holy War' against the Imam's leadership in August 1977, stating that he was leaving the community and planning to form a movement in order to revitalise Elijah Muhammad's teachings and programmes.[68] From 1975 to 1978, while Imam W. D. Mohammed was busy introducing sweeping changes in the community, Minister Farrakhan travelled, for the most part abroad, representing the Imam and the movement. During this period he had the time and space to think through the consequences of the radical and fundamental changes in teachings, programmes and organisations that Elijah Muhammad had instituted. In November 1977

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[65] Interview with Imam W. D. Mohammed, 25 December 1995.
[66] Interview with Minister Louis Farrakhan, 1 January 1996.
[67] Lincoln, *Black Muslims.*
[68] See footnote 2.

Farrakhan made his expected public decision to leave the Imam's community during his speech given at the Institute of Positive Education in Chicago.[69] He explained his reasons for leaving in his interviews with the press.

> I have visited Christian, Muslim, Socialist, Capitalist and Communist countries. Wherever I found a plurality of races, I consistently found the Black man on the bottom. This deepened my realization of a necessity for a specific message to Black people to remedy the many ills that we suffer.[70]

He further clarified his reasons for leaving, referring to the reforms introduced into the community:

> The effects of the changes within the World of Community of Islam, in addition to the information I gained about our people in my travels abroad, caused me to reassess the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, his teaching and program for Black people. My articulation of this caused Emam [Imam] W. D. Muhammad to announce to the entire Muslim body that I was no longer a person with whom the Muslims (WCIW) should associate, listen to ...[71]

During my interview with Minister Farrakhan in 1996, he cited in particular the collapse of organisational patterns in the movement and the loss of the believers' communal spirit as his reasons for rebuilding the NOI:

> I watched his [Imam W. D. Mohammed] and I watched the spirit of Muslims to denigrate, I watched the discipline to fall apart, I watched all economic advancements that we made to dissipate to nothing. I watched all of the schools that Elijah Muhammad had built closed, one by one. And so I've decided that I would attempt to rebuild the work of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad. There was only one other man with me at the time. And so we got together, none of us had any money but we began to rebuild the Nation of Islam according to the teachings and guidance of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad ...[72]

Unlike the Imam's radical reforms and policies, Minister Farrakhan has followed a different path that reflects gradualism. He began this process in the late 1980s onwards in both religious and political arenas.

Minister Farrakhan did not become involved in politics until Jesse Jackson's 1984 presidential campaign. He remained loyal to his teacher's,

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[69] Madhubuti, H. R., ed., "Black Books Bulletin Interview Minister Abdul Farrakhan", *Black Books Bulletin* 6/1 (1978): 42-45, 70; L. Muhammad, "New Farrakhan Thrust", *Chicago Defender*, December 1977.

[70] Madhubuti, "Black Books Bulletin Interview Minister Abdul Farrakhan", 45; For the similar reasons and observations that Farrakhan raised, see also C. Russel, "An Interview with Abdul Farrakhan", *Chicago Defender,* 11 February 1978.

[71] Russel, "An Interview with Abdul Farrakhan".

[72] Interview with Minister Louis Farrakhan, 1 January 1996.

Elijah Muhammad, political policies and stance up to this political event. Prior to that, immediately after his defection from Imam W. D. Mohammed's community, when he intended to rebuild the NOI, Minister Farrakhan expressed his new goals to Madhubuti and asked his assistance to establish greater relations in the black community. He said 'his goal was to involve the nation with the larger black community. His vision was much in line with many of those in Chicago's black political and cultural community'.[73] With Jesse Jackson's presidential bid, he seized a good opportunity and broke away from strict adherence to Elijah Muhammad's policies as far as politics were concerned. In February 1984, he asked hundreds of his followers to register to vote and also urged other black nationalist and political movements to do so in order to support Jackson's bid.[74] However, as indicated earlier, his enthusiasm in politics did not last long because of the controversies surrounding his statements about Jewish people and the media's allegations.

Instead, in the mid-1980s, like Elijah Muhammad, Farrakhan gave greater priority to the social, economic and moral teachings of the NOI, hoping to improve the socio-economic conditions of black people. For that purpose, he launched a programme known as POWER (People Organized and Working for Economic Rebirth). The aim of the programme is that it put:

> the consumer together with black producer in a way that gives us [AAs] both equal benefits, through a system of distribution that we set up. Thus we become the producer, we are the distributor, we are the consumer, and the money stays in our circle. Then we can build our own community up and become a strong and powerful people right within the land where we were sold as slaves ...[75]

To generate funds for this programme, Minister Farrakhan's NOI launched a nation-wide campaign by selling its products such as tapes, books, cleaning materials, toiletries, etc. However, with the NOI's limited resources, it was impossible to maintain this economic programme. With his cordial relations with Colonel Qadhdhafi, the president of Libya, the NOI secured to receive a controversial $5 million dollar interest-free loan in 1985.[76] In the early

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[73] H. R. Madhubuti, *Claiming Earth: Race, Rage, Rape and Redemption* (Chicago: Third World Press, 1994), 81.

[74] C. Strausberg, "Muslims Get into Politics; Hundreds Register to Vote", *Chicago Defender*, 11 February 1984.

[75] Louis Farrakhan, *Back Where We Belong: Selected Speeches by Minister Louis Farrakhan*, ed. J.D. Eure and J.M. Richard (Philadelphia: PC International Press, 1989), 156.

[76] E. Black, "Would You Buy a Toothpaste from This Man: Louis Farrakhan", *Chicago Reader*, April 1986, 1-36; S. Monroe and J. Schwartz, "Islam's New Entrepreneur", *Newsweek,* 13 July 1987.

1970s, Qadhdhafi also financially helped the NOI during Elijah Muhammad's era to ease the movement's economic programmes and financial difficulties.[77] It has to be noted here that Qadhdhafi's financial support was far removed from religious or Islamic causes. This support was rather to assist nationalist movements, protest movements and political and revolutionary movements which were opposed to Western governments and powers.

In 1986, Minister Farrakhan toured the Muslim countries of Libya, Syria, Sudan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates seeking recognition of the NOI as a legitimate Islamic movement in the West and establishing political and religious ties with the Muslim World. While Imam W. D. Mohammed gave more importance to establishing good relations with moderate heads of Muslim countries, Farrakhan seemed to prefer to build ties with the revolutionary leaders of Muslim and African States.[78] However, his tour of the Muslim countries in the hope of building closer ties created controversy in US international politics rather than adding to the religious vision in the teachings of Minister Farrakhan. US relations with Libya became very tense in 1986 after the discotheque bombing in Germany, where several US military personnel died. This subsequently led to the American bombing of Libya as they suspected that Libya was behind this incident. Farrakhan vehemently condemned The US bombing of Libya. He relates this event with an experience he had in Mexico where he saw a vision, and met and talked to Elijah Muhammad in a spacecraft called the 'Mother Wheel', the 'Mother Ship' or 'the Ezekiel's Wheel'.[79] He says:

> I'm sure you've heard something of an experience that I had while I was in a little village in Mexico that you've read about this experience that I had where I was spoken to by Elijah Muhammad and given certain information that proved to be very very accurate. That information was that Regean had met with the Joint Chief of Staff and had planned a war. He

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[77] In the early 1970s, the NOI experienced economic and financial problems. To implement its economic programmes the NOI sought financial assistance from the Muslim world. Muslim countries, including Libya and some Gulf states, gave financial help to ease the movement's economic burden on the condition that the NOI would gradually move toward mainstream Islam in terms of practice and beliefs. Accordingly, Elijah Muhammad tuned down his anti-white rhetoric and introduced some signs of accommodation and mainstreaming to Islam. For further information, see Tinaz, *Conversion of African Americans,* ch. I; Interviews with Imam W.D. Mohammed, 5 July 1996 and Imam Murad B. Deen, 5 April 1997.

[78] N. Tinaz, "The Black Muslims and Their Relations with the Orthodox Muslims and Muslim World in Political, Economic and Religious Perspectives", *Eurames Annual Conference,* Summer 1993, University of Warwick, Coventry, UK.

[79] For the full explanation of Farrakhan's vision, see Gardell, *Countdown to Armageddon,* 131-35. Farrakhan also relates his experience in Mexico in rebuilding the NOI, saying that he believes was divinely guided (Interview with Minister Louis Farrakhan, 1 January 1996).

didn't tell me who the war was against. But I've later learned or believed that that war was against Muammar Qadhdhafi. So I went to Libya to warn Qadhdhafi of Regean's intentions. Shortly thereafter Regean bombed Tripoli, killing Qadhdhafi's adopted daughter and wounding some members of his household and killing over a hundred persons ...[80]

Farrakhan further relates that this vision was an inspiration for him to organise the Million Man March (MMM) in 1995. This will be discussed at the end of this section.

From 1986 onwards Minister Farrakhan began gradually to regain the old NOI properties as a result of the relative success of his economic programmes, while in 1986, Imam W. D. Mohammed's community lost a case in the probate court. In 1979, three illegitimate children of Elijah Muhammad, children of his secretaries, filed a suit to recover all assets of the former NOI inherited by the Imam's organisation. After a long legal battle, the court ruled in favour of the Elijah Muhammad Estate, the Progressive Land Developers. The legal battle further extended to other assets of the former NOI and the court's decision led to Imam W. D. Mohammed's community declaring bankruptcy. Here, it is not my intention to give further details about these legal cases between the families of Elijah Muhammad, those who were children of Clara Muhammad and those who were his secretaries and their children. An account of this decade-long legal battle can be found in the media coverage at that time.[81]

Farrakhan's NOI bought most of the former NOI's properties from the Imam's community, including residential Palaces in Chicago and Phoenix and the most significant one the Elijah Muhammad Masjid on Stoney Island on the south side of Chicago. Minister Farrakhan considers that the new NOI's being able to successfully regain all the properties of the movement from Elijah Muhammad's time were meaningful signs that he is the legitimate successor of Elijah.[82] He says that:

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[80] Interview with Minister Louis Farrakhan, 1 January 1996.

[81] T. Brune and J. Ylisela, "Broken Legacy", *Chicago*, December, 1991; C. Mount, "Muhammad's Heirs to Share Fortune", *Chicago Tribune*, 11 July 1986; C. Strausberg, "Elijah's Estate to Legitimate Heirs", *Chicago Defender*, 12 July 1986; N. Omar, "Efforts to Grab Muslim Properties Continues", *Muslim Journal*, 16 February 1987; N. Omar, "Atty. Rufus Cook Has Worked Against Muslims Since 1970", *Muslim Journal*, 13 February 1987 and "Appeal Court Dismisses Muslims' Appeal in Progressive Land Case", *Muslim Journal*, 20 February 1987.

[82] D. Jackson, "Profit and Promises: Ascent and Grandeur", *Chicago Tribune*, 15 March 1995; D. Jackson and W. Gains, "Profit and Promises: The Power and the Money", *Chicago Tribune*, 12 March 1995; D. Jackson and W. Gains, "Profit and Promises: the Business of Security", *Chicago Tribune*, 13 March 1995.

> So part of our work was to go back and regain the Mosque. And if you look at us we have regained all the Nation's properties just about without firing a shot, without ugly dialogue of bitterness and we bought back from Imam Warith Deen Mohammed ... We raised cash, bought the Mosque ... this home and Mr Muhammad's home in Phoenix ... we purchased the farm in Georgia ... So my effort is to rebuild his [Elijah Muhammad] and his people according to a plan that we believe was given to him by Allah.[83]

By the end of 1988, Minister Farrakhan had fully resurrected the NOI to the original teachings and organisations of Elijah Muhammad. He restored many of the businesses and institutions, following Elijah's 'economic blueprints'. In 1979 he established the NOI's newspaper, *the Final Call*. The name of the paper has derived from the first newspaper of the movement when the NOI emerged in the early 1930s in Detroit during W. D. Fard's era.[84] In 1988, the Minister reopened the Mosque Maryam as both the Chicago Muslims's home mosque and the NOI National Center. He also reopened the educational institution, the University of Islam, under the name Muhammad's University of Islam, with education being offered from kindergarten through high school, where students are taught separately according to the principles and teachings of the NOI.[85]

By the late 1980s the NOI had continued its steady growth both organisationally and in membership rates, using a variety of recruitment tactics such as huge public speaking programmes, the media, its own literature and hip-hop music, etc.[86] This expansion necessitated a bureaucratic administration. Assuming that the NOI is a *Nation within a Nation*, Farrakhan established a bureaucracy that was a modelled as a state, with departments of international relations, health, education, administration, defence-security, prison, justice and youth, each headed by a minister.[87]

However, from the late 1980s onwards, the NOI entered a new phase, gradualism in terms of economic and political policies, tending to move towards the mainstream politics and economics of the US. After the Jesse Jackson's 1984 presidential campaign, Minister Farrakhan appeared to seek a larger role in US domestic politics and economy from 1988 onwards. In

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[83] Interview with Minister Louis Farrakhan, 1 January 1996.
[84] Interview with Dr Abdul Salaam, 23 August, 1995 and 27 September 1995.
[85] Interviews with Misbahu Rufai, 18 June 1995; 10 January 1996; 22 April 2000 and Shelby Muhammad, 30 June 1995; 10 September 1995.
[86] Gardell, *Countdown to Armageddon*, 139-41.
[87] Jackson and W. Gains, "Profit and Promises: The Power and the Money"; Gardell, *Countdown to Armageddon*, 142.

1988, the NOI established several security agencies.[88] These agencies won contracts with local and federal government departments in several states which involved crime patrol in drug-infected areas in big cities. The NOI's FOI members, or soldiers, managed to clean up the streets of drug trafficking, prostitution and crime where even sometimes government and state police and security forces had failed to make any headway. The NOI extended its security contracts to housing projects by making a deal with US Department of Housing and Urban Development to protect urban residents where the majority of them were African Americans, and to attempt to bring an atmosphere of security.[89] The NOI received great respect and acceptability due to these successful efforts, not only from conventional black organisations and leaders, but also from local and federal political institutions.[90] Consequently, with the positive contribution to civic affairs, the images of the NOI and Minister Farrakhan have begun to change and improve during the early years of the 1990s. Farrakhan, accordingly, tried to reach out to both the black and white mainstream middle class, as well as to leaders and organisations by toning down and moderating his rhetoric regarding Jewish and white people, hoping to seek a larger role in US politics.[91] Going further, the NOI officials wanted to be able to take an active role in local and federal politics.[92]

Consequently, Minister Farrakhan's NOI not only received respect and recognition from mainstream black leaders and political and civic authorities as a result of its contributions to society, but the movement has also established itself well economically. Through Farrakhan's Power programme, and mostly through the security and housing contracts, the NOI has created an economic power base right inside Black America.[93]

The most important developments in the early 1990s was that conventional black leaders and politicians and civil right organisations expressed their

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[88] Jackson and Gains, "Profit and Promises".

[89] Walsh, K., et al. "The New Drug Vigilantes", *U.S. News & World Report*, 9 May 1988; S. Monroe, "Doing the Right Thing", *Newsweek*, 16 April 1990; L. Wright and D. Glick, "Farrakhan's Mission", *Newsweek*, 17 March 1990; V. Loeb, "D. C. Hires Nation of Islam Guards for SE Complex", *Washington Post*, 4 May 1995.

[90] N. McCall, "D.C. Council Votes to Praise Farrakhan's anti-drug Work", *Washington Post*, 25 October 1989: B. Torque, et al. "Playing a Different Tune", *Newsweek*, 28 June 1993.

[91] N. McCall, "Farrakhan Seeks Larger Role in US Politics", *Washington Post*, 1 March 1990; Torque, "Playing a Different Tune".

[92] N. McCall, "Nation of Islam Plans to Run 1st Candidates in Area Election", *Washington Post*, 5 May 1990.

[93] Jackson and Gains, "Profit and Promises".

desire to establish a dialogue with Minister Farrakhan; this was at a time when *Time* magazine showed a rise in his popularity among African Americans, particularly among the youth.[94] They wanted to include Farrakhan and his NOI as part of larger civil rights groups so as to create unity. At the 1993 Annual Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) meeting, conventional black politicians publicly expressed their desire to establish dialogue with Minister Farrakhan. The CBC chairman Kweisi Mfume announced:

> We want the word to go forward today to friend and foe alike that the Congressional Black Caucus, after having entered into a sacred covenant with the NAACP to work for a real and meaningful change, will enter into that same covenant with the Nation of Islam ...[95]

In the following year, the executive director of the NAACP (National Association of Advancement for Colored People) at the time, Benjamin Chavis, who later converted to Farrakhan's NOI in February 1997, defended Minister Farrakhan against the media and criticisms and attacks of the ADL (Anti-Defamation League).

> The NAACP is prepared to believe Minister Farrakhan's statement that he is neither anti-Semitic, nor racist and we look forward to concrete deeds in the future that would affirm his statements.[96]

In 1994, Chavis organised the first National African-American Leadership Summit at the headquarters of the NAACP. Despite the objections of major Jewish civil rights organisations, Farrakhan was invited to the Summit in order to 'reach out to a broad range of leadership among blacks'.[97]

There is no doubt that the greatest social and political event in the black community in recent years, and maybe in the history of African Americans, was the MMM organised by Minister Farrakhan. At the end of 1994, Minister Farrakhan called for a march, with mostly black people and other dissatisfied ethnic communities in American society participating. He relates this call to the vision that he experienced in Mexico and explains the main incentives of the march:

> as I watched television and saw the way the media was portraying black youth and feeding guns into the black community, along with drugs and fermenting and stimulating gang violence and gang conflict, which would

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[94] *Time*, 28 February 1994.
[95] F. Daniel, "Louis Farrakhan: America's Other Son", *N'Digo*, February, 1996.
[96] G. E. Curry, "Unity in the Community", *Emerge,* September 1994.
[97] Curry, "Unity in the Community", 36.

cause decent people to call for God and march to restore order, because the police was saying they could not handle the gang warfare. And so I saw this as a precipitant to all-out war on black youth in the black communi-ty. So I started touring and saying 'Stop Killing', meeting with gang lead-ers, talking to them and then it crystallized for me that I should begin speaking directly to black men ... And while I was speaking to black men, my first engagement with them, I said 'I am asking for One Million Men to march on Washington and shut the government down ...[98]

However, Minister Farrakhan broadened his call to include other dissatisfied segments of American society. In the December 14 1994 issue of the *Final Call*, he stated that 'now the God of Justice has declared that it is time for us as black men and Christians, Muslims, Nationalists, Agnostics, young and old members of every fraternal, civic and political organization to stand together as one to declare our right to justice and our right to determine the future of ourselves and our people'.[99] To attract more participants for the march, Farrakhan focused on reconciliation issues, conservative values and socio-economic empowerment. He called the march 'A Day of Atonement and Reconciliation'.[100]

> Can we then begin to reconcile ourselves with the Creator ... successfully reconcile our differences and accelerate the upward mobility of the black community ... The potential presence of blacks in Washington will be a day set aside to reconcile our spiritual inner beings and to direct our focus to developing our communities, strengthening our families, working to uphold and protect our civil and human rights, and empowering ourselves ... a more effective use of our dollars, and through the power of the vote ...[101]

With the endorsement of more than two hundred black national and pro-fessional organisations, the march brought together a wide spectrum of hun-dreds of thousands of black people and significant number of other dissatis-fied ethnic minorities in Washington, D.C. on October 16, 1995. The march was marked by a collective spirit and solidarity with the participation of many prominent African American professionals and leaders, such as civil rights veteran Rosa Parks, poet Maya Angelo, civil rights leader Jesse Jackson, B. Chavis, the Mayor of Washington D.C., Marion Barry, Steve Wonder, etc.[102]

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[98] Interview with Minister Louis Farrakhan, 1 January 1996.
[99] L. Farrakhan, "A Million Man March", *Final Call*, 14 December 1994.
[100] L. Farrakhan, "Why a Million Men March", *Final Call*, 30 August 1995.
[101] Farrakhan, "Why a Million Men March".
[102] However, a significant number of black professionals and politicians who are important players in the civil rights community, such as Congressmen J. Lewis (D-Ga), and C. Rangel (D-N.Y.), Professor Roger Wilkins and the civil rights chair Mary F. Berry (Curry, 1996) did not participate in the march. On the contrary, they expressed their criticism of the organisers

In his long speech, Farrakhan expressed the main objectives of the march, which seemed to aim at forming a political platform that would influence the political structure of the US.

> We are gathered here to collect ourselves for a responsibility that God is placing on our shoulders to move this Nation [US] towards a more perfect union ... black man, you don't have to bash white people. All we got to do is go back home and turn our communities into productive places'.[103]

Moreover, following the march Farrakhan exposed a more statesman-like character while assessing the results of the historical event. He said 'from now on, I would try to be more statesmen like in his language and behaviour because the march elevated his stature and his responsibility'.[104] Consequently, the march changed his image and perception among African Americans and Farrakhan became the most important African American individual among conventional black leaders.[105] The other consequences of the march were that it politically mobilised African Americans and increased their political participation in mainstream American politics, because the organisers urged eligible voters who were dissatisfied to register to vote. Consequently, the impact of this political participation was reflected in the 1996 general US election where African Americans historically and traditionally support Democrat Party which won election for second term.[106]

During my interview with him, Farrakhan spelled out his political plans not outside the US, but inside mainstream American politics:

> In America there is a tremendous dissatisfaction with politics ... that says to political scientists that there is dissatisfaction in America across all racial lines or color lines with the government. It is our hope to register eight million African Americans, black people who are eligible but not registered. I'm intending this year [1996] to speak to the immigrant Muslim communities who have social status, economic status, but not political influence. And these social and economic statuses must be leveraged into economic influence, I mean political influence. Otherwise, our six million Muslims can never be an effective force for change in the political process that's called democracy. I also intend to speak to the Hispanic communities ... Asian communities ... even to the white community. Why? Because some of them are dissatisfied as Democrats, others are dissatisfied as Republicans and

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of the march, but not the agenda of it. See G. E. Curry, "After the Million Man March", *Emerge*, February 1996; Tinaz, "Nation of Islam".

[103] L. Farrakhan, "The Million Man March", Audio Tape, 15 October 1995.

[104] D. Terry, "Seeking Statesmanship: Farrakhan Softens Tone", *New York Times*, 25 October 1995.

[105] Curry "After the Million Man March".

[106] Personal communications and exchange opinions with Mattias Gardell, 7 March 1997.

others are dissatisfied as Independents. So what I feel the time has dictated that we create a Third Political Force. Not a Third Political party, but a Third Political Force, meaning that if the alienated blacks become the bedrock of this Third Force ... but Hispanics ... Arabs ... Pakistanis and Muslims become a part of that Third Force. Neither Democrats nor Republican but now developing an agenda that's in the interest of all of us going pass our color but in the interests of all of us so-called citizens of America ... we can force our agenda into the Republican platform and into the Democratic platform and we can choose who would be next president. We would become a powerful political force for change, not through violence, but through the leveraging of our dissatisfaction ...[107]

This kind of political involvement and agenda shows that Farrakhan differs from the classical political stance of the NOI, which was political absentism, quietism and separatism, that is not getting engaged with the 'devil's' politics. The above statements also indicate that Minister Farrakhan and his NOI are in the process of moving from the periphery to the centre of American social, political and economic life.[108]

Conclusion

In conclusion, both communities have been moving toward mainstream American society. This indicates that as a social or religious movement develops in social, political and economic settings its relation with the surrounding society will also change. This process sometimes takes radical and extreme forms and leads to the institutionalisation of the movement. But sometime the changes are less dramatic and affect only certain ideological and structural patterns of the movement.[109] It is also possible to interpret these two communities' move towards mainstream society with the arguments of Zald and Ash. They maintain that 'as a MO [movement organization] attains an economic and social base in society ... a bureaucratic structure emerges and general accommodation to the society occurs ...'[110] From this perspective, Lincoln's predictions and speculation about the prospectus of AAMs are very accurate. He argues that the socio-economic success and prosperity of AAMs cause

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[107] Interview with Minister Louis Farrakhan, 1 January 1996.

[108] R. D. Novak, "Column on Farrakhan Sets the Torches to Burning", *Chicago Sun-Times*, 27 March 1997.

[109] R. Turner and L. Killian, *Collective Behavior* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972); M. Zald, *Organizational Change: The Political Economy of the YMCA* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); E. B. Rochford, "Recruitment Strategies, Ideology and Organization in the Hare Krishna Movement", *Social Problems* 29/4 (1982), 99-410.

[110] Zald and Ash, "Social Movement Organizations".

them to tone down their separatist and nationalistic emphases in order not to put their socio-economic advancements at risk. They see security, steady growth and continuity of their wealth as being guaranteed within the established system of the United States.[111] Both communities have been trying to use political and economic lobbying to influence American political spheres when the existential rights, problems and interests of African Americans are concerned. They also seek a specific version of political representation that is relevant and addresses their situations and life in America. Unlike Imam W. D. Mohammed, Minister Farrakhan still displays enigmatic political and economic postures towards mainstream American society and its institutions depending on the circumstances. His community sometimes shows some signs of gradual mainstreaming and transformation into mainstream American society, and sometimes critical, distant and questioning. However, Imam W. D. Muhammad's recently decentralised community, The Mosque Cares, seems to have fully adapted to and accommodated American society and institutions by observing the benefits, concerns and rights of American Muslims in general and African American Muslims in particular.

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[111] Lincoln, *Black Muslims*.